MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • OCTOBER 1999

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SUSAN CEE WINEBERG

Pancake Supper A Success

Saturday September 18th was a perfect day for a pancake supper. The sun shone brightly as the King Pancake Co. of Belleville set up their grills and the hungry came by to eat pancakes made with New Hope Mills Flour from Batavia. NY. Also on hand were sausages grilled to order, applesauce, and real maple syrup from Snow's Sugarbush of Mason, Michigan. Exhibits highlighting businesses of Washtenaw County and old kitchen utensils were on display in the Museum, along with a table made from a 300-year old oak tree by David F. Allmendinger and brought for the occasion by Harriet Birch. Our gift shop was open and ready for business selling books, notecards and tiny bells decorated and donated by Harriet Birch. Over 100 people attended and approximately $530 was taken in.

Mayor Sheldon samples our pancakes. Louisa Pieper looks on.

Story continued on page 4.

DALE LESLIE

Dr. Aaron Edwards: Ann Arbor's Heroic Pediatrician

Photo courtesy of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital

Dr. Edwards pictured in a familiar setting. A stethoscope was a fixture around his neck.

He appeared in the photograph just as I remembered him. He was handsome. A fair complexion and hair well groomed; a serious pose offset by compassionate eyes. Dr. Aaron Robinson Edwards' picture hangs at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in a photographic gallery of physicians who respected the Hippocratic oath. These physicians reciprocated their patients' loyalty by providing up-to-date, reliable and compassionate medical care.

During the 1950s, I remember Dr. Edwards as the family doctor in town. Ann Arbor was half of today's population and there was a limited choice of pediatricians. Countless parents, many of whom are now grandparents, fondly remember Dr. Edwards as the caregiver of their children. My parents were no exception. When I was sick, they called Dr. Edwards. A stethoscope was a fixture around his neck. "You have broad shoulders," he once remarked to me as he patted me on the back. "You'll make a good fullback some day." This was high praise for an eight-year old. My mother said we could ask Uncle Bud just exactly what a fullback was.

Continued on page 2.

Dr. Aaron Edwards . . .

Continued from page 1.

It was an era before monstrous medical buildings with their multitude of doctors' offices. Dr. Edwards' practice was in the family home, a two-story frame house at 916 Church Street. The house stood tall on an elevated lot as did many of the homes in this close-knit neighborhood. His wife, Mary Katherine Edwards, was the quarterback of the team. Patients were treated as guests in their home and she was always there to greet you.

Mrs. Edwards kept the medical office and their household affairs humming. I can still see her standing on the front porch, waving good-bye while sharing some last tidbit of wisdom as my mother carried me down their sidewalk. The Edwards were the proud parents of five children whose ages were spread over nine years. I knew their oldest son Mars, from his job as camp counselor at the Ann Arbor YMCA summer day camp.

Born July 23, 1912 in Marysville, Ohio, Dr. Edward matriculated with an M.D. from Cornell University Medical School in 1938. He interned at Harper Hospital and completed his residency at Children's Hospital, both in Detroit. On October 25, 1941 he married Mary Katherine Martin of Detroit. He served honorably as a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1942-1945 and after his discharge came to Ann Arbor to finish his pediatric training under Dr. James L. Wilson of University Hospital.

In 1946 Dr. Edwards opened a private practice in Ann Arbor and became a member of the staff of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. He was a respected teacher of nurses and interns and valued and respected by his colleagues. To young eyes he was a hero and to parents he was a reliable, thorough and approachable physician. We put him on a pedestal that suddenly and tragically crumbled when his life was cut short at the age of 46.

On Sunday evening, November 9, 1958, a raging fire, apparently kindled by sparks from an unscreened fireplace, engulfed the Edwards' home. The family bedrooms were on the second floor. Mrs. Edwards and two of their three sons David and Bruce—ages 9 and 7—escaped the inferno by scrambling to the flat part of their roof. They jumped to safety into the waiting arms of their neighbors who had gathered to help.

Meanwhile, Dr. Edwards somehow had escaped the fast-spreading fire, stumbling out the front door and into the cold night air. To his horror, he realized that his daughters Karon (12), and Lucinda (6) remained inside the smoke-filled house. He quickly dashed into the home to rescue them. All three succumbed to the thick, gray smoke.

I will never forget the shock as we awakened to the news report the following morning. It was a story that could not be true. " The radio newsman must be mistaken. This could not happen" we thought. The Ann Arbor community was rocked with grief. The tragedy was a front-page story and to this day I wish it was a nightmare from which I will awaken.

Many tributes were shared about Dr. Edwards from his colleagues and friends. He was remembered as a devoted husband, father and physician. Today there remains a comfortable, warm feeling when I look at his photograph in the hospital hallway. I never became the fullback that he predicted. But he made me feel good and I shall always remember him.

Dale Leslie is the former owner of Leslie Office Supply. He currently works for the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce.

Do you have an interesting story about life in Washtenaw County? Please send it to the editor Susan Wineberg, 712 E. Ann St, Ann Arbor MI 48104 or e-mail it to swines@umich.edu. If we have room and think it appropriate we will gladly print your story.

"What's It?" Game & Loan Boxes

WCHS offers traveling exhibits of small artifacts set up as a humorous "What's It?" game to schools for children and another for adults. They are available for classes and meetings.

Two Loan Boxes, developed with funds from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, are available to teachers for a $15 rental fee. One box deals with **Life Before Electricity** and contains artifacts which children can touch, a teaching text, posters, and books. The second box, **Hats to Spats** explores clothing development both in general and in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County with appropriate artifacts and books.

For information contact Sally Silvennoinen, 734-971-5086.

Artifacts To Donate

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS may contact Judy Chrisman, collections chair at 734-769-7859 or by mail, 1809 Dexter Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

October Sponsor

***Impressions* Sponsor**

GT Products

Ann Arbor Michigan

Special *Thanks* to Deb Royal of Strategies Marketing & Design, who donated the redesign of the newsletter to the Society.

We are looking very good thanks to Deb.

HARRIET ARNOW

Some Musings On The Nature Of History: The Clarence Burton Memorial Lecture 1968-69

Harriet Arnow, noted author of the prize-winning novel The Dollmaker, lived at 3220 Nixon Road in Ann Arbor Township from 1950-1986. Her musings on history, reprinted in a pamphlet, are informative as well as inspiring. She was originally from Kentucky

I am not exactly a historian. I have at times pondered on: "What is history?" Such answers as I have came late in life.

Beginning somewhere behind memory, stories of the "old days" as my people called them, were a taken-for-granted part of childhood. They were of all kinds and ages, some going behind the French and Indian War. Yet I never thought of them as a form of history; history was in the books I would read…I remember no consciousness of learning as I listened; rather, I recall emotions, a sense of belonging, and curiosity. Still, those old stories have lived with me all my life.

I also, beginning before school age, quite often visited a museum. I did not recognize the place as a museum. Neither did anyone else. It was the home of two elderly ladies, cousins of my then dead maternal grandfather.

Built in the days when people wanted plenty of room, the home was large with window shutters, gingerbread, a great variety of gables and verandas. The interior was still more fascinating, crowded as it was with all manner of furniture and bric-a-brac. Much of this was the accumulation of generations; the rest was what the present owners felt was necessary to a truly Victorian atmosphere.

The ladies worshipped Queen Victoria. They knew but did not quite comprehend that she was long since dead. These cousins were for me the most interesting parts of the museum. Human beings never had legs, only limbs, that is for well brought up females such as they, who also always used the proper title in referring or speaking to husbands; in that household, Reverend and Mister…

It was during college that my world broadened. It is now getting on to forty years since I took a summer's job in a small resort near Petoskey, Michigan. I found myself in a delightful world of blue water, blue skies, white birches, stump fences, swamps, and with leisure to enjoy it all…

Best of all were the people I got to know---owners, workers and guests many of whom were from Michigan and through them I learned something of the many ways of life in the state…

In the meantime I had, beginning with my first trip to Michigan, visited a close relative living near Detroit; and so became acquainted with the city and the surrounding country. An especial attraction was Ann Arbor. My awe of the University …was almost matched by delight in the tree-filled town with its stately homes; and all around it the farmers' fields in which cattle grazed almost to the city limits.

Better yet were the farms out from the town. They appeared prosperous, happy, stable, their many buildings stood like small villages separated by broad fields. The silos rose highest, but the great hip-roofed barns were the dominant feature. I could read the dates on many---1908, 1914, 1927; nice to know they were not old, and so would be there a long, long time as would the older stone or brick smoke houses.

Years passed. I published. I married. World War II took the world by the hair of the head. My husband returned to his work of newspaperman in Detroit…I also tried to learn something of my new homeland, both by reading and looking.

One of our favorite short drives was into Ann Arbor and the surrounding country. In spite of time and war, that world had changed but little, or so it seemed. The University was bigger, more traffic in the town, but blindfolded justice still held her scales above the old courthouse with its worn stone steps and elm-shaded lawn. Ann Arbor yet had her trees, though farmers' fields no longer ringed the town. I noticed, too, especially on Plymouth Road, that several barns appeared deserted and neighboring silos roofless.

Yet, only a few miles away from Ann Arbor the world of big barns, well kept homes and fields still spoke of abundance and peace, but above all stability. The only real changed noticed was the displacement of work horses by tractors.

To be continued next issue . . .

Three Free Houses Available From City

The City of Ann Arbor will soon demolish the Forest St. Parking Structure and three adjoining houses on Willard St. The houses are in fine condition and could be moved. Two of them date from the early 1890s and have fine interior woodwork. The third house seems to date from the 1860s. The city will also throw in the demolition costs budgeted for the project. This will be happening very soon so if you are interested please contact Adrian Iraola of the Engineering Department of the City at 994-6087.

Beach Balls Are Rolling

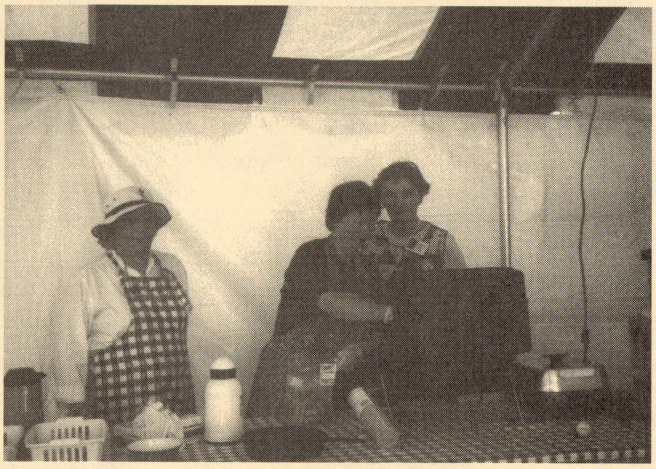
Your response to our Beach Ball Fund Raiser has given us a big bounce. To date over $3000 has been sent to our Museum Fund. Thank you to all our supporters for helping us to "keep the ball rolling."

SUSAN CEE WINEBERG

Pancake Supper A Success

Continued from page 1.

Many, many people need to be thanked for their efforts. President **Pauline Walters** did yeoman service in organizing this event. She was helped by **Karen O'Neal** and **Judy Chrisman** who set up the exhibits; **Lisa Black** and **Kay Huntzinger** who manned the Museum Shop; **Nancy Bryk** and **Louisa Pieper** (helped by **Marjorie Cripps** and **Mary Rinne**) who slaved over a hot grill making sausages for our hungry hordes; **Pat Thompson** and **Grace Shackman** who got our garden into shape for the event; **Patty Creal** who shopped; **Pam Newhouse** who arranged flowers and did publicity; **Doug Kelley** who did furniture set up and coffee runs with **Jay Snyder** and **Elsie Dyke**; **Ann and Greg De Freytas** who waited on tables and sold tickets as did **Harriet Birch**; and **Ralph Beebe** and **Esther Warzynski** who manned the rooms in the museum. Others who helped were: **Susan Wineberg**, **Lars Bjorn**, **Rosemarion Blake**, **Karen Simpson, Letitia Byrd**, **Arlene Schmid**, **Terry Brinkman** and **Trudy Bulkley**. If we have forgotten anyone, we apologize!



Photos taken by Susan Wineberg and Lars Bjorn

Photographs: ***Top right*** **- The Museum looks festive for the occasion.** ***Top left*** **- Volunteers Marjorie Cripps, Nancy Bryk, Mary Rinne, President Pauline Walters and Karen O'Neal.** ***Middle*** **- Our pancake flippers from the King Pancake Co. of Belleville, MI.** ***Bottom left*** **- Health Inspector Mr. Walezesky gives the OK. Louisa Pieper has nothing to worry about.** ***Bottom right*** **- Volunteers Rosemarion Blake, Louisa Pieper and Mary Rinne tend to the sausages.**

Happenings Around The County

The ***Dixboro United Methodist Church*** will be having a show of Historical Family Quilts on November 13, 1999 from 10 AM-3 PM. Many of these quilts are antiques and are a window on county history from a woman's perspective. There is a $3.00 charge and a light lunch will be available. The church is handicap accessible. It is in the Village of Dixboro and can be reached from Plymouth Road by turning north just past the Dixboro General Store after the Little Red Schoolhouse. The address is 5221 Church Road. For information call 663-6012 (evenings) or 663-2990 (days).

The ***Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation*** will be hosting a talk on Tuesday, November 23rd at 7:30 PM by Brian Dunnigan, Curator of Maps at the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. He will be speaking on "Old Detroit." The location is to be announced. For more information call 734-485-3683

The ***Rentschler Farm Museum*** in Saline is open this fall. The farmhouse, barns and outbuildings are open on Saturdays from 10-2. Tour the farm and learn first hand about Michigan family farm life. For three generations the Rentschlers farmed the 216 acre property. It was primarily a dairy, then a sheep farm that also grew wheat and other crops. The farmhouse is a Queen Anne style house dating from the early 20th century. If you would like to schedule a tour at another time please contact the Saline Area Chamber of Commerce, 734-429-4494. The farm is located on Michigan Avenue just east of Saline proper.

Lessons, workshops and festive balls at ***Grand Traditions Vintage Dance Academy*** will be held on 2nd Saturdays and Sunday from September 1999-April 2000. All will be held at the Pittsfield Grange Hall, Ann Arbor-Saline Road, and 1/2 mile south of I-94. Cathy Stephens teaches classes in Vintage and Swing dancing and three lessons cost $32.00. For more information call 734-429-0014.

The Michigan Department of State, State Historic Preservation Office has informed us that the Michigan Historic Preservation Review Board at its meeting October 1st will consider the ***Chelsea Historic Commercial District*** for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. We wish them all success.

Any society wishing to publicize an event should contact the Editor Susan Wineberg at 712 E. Ann St., Ann Arbor, 48104 or call 734-668-7470. Her e-mail address is swines@umich.edu.

County Groups At A Glance

Chelsea Historical Society: The Depot Museum is open 1-3 P.M. Saturdays or by appointment, 475-7047.

Dexter Area Historical Society: Museum at 3443 Inverness St., 426-2519 Hours vary.

Pittsfield Society: The new society is seeking suggestions for speakers and programs. Contact them at P.O. Box 6013, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Saline Historical Society: Depot Museum open 10-2 Saturdays or by Appointment. The new Rentschler Farm Museum is open Saturdays from 10-2 in the early fall. Contact Wayne Clements at 429-9621.

Ypsilanti Historical Society: Museum, 220 N. Huron open 2-4 Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Archives open 9-noon Monday-Friday. Call 482-4990.

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation, 102 N. Wallace, 485-3683. Holds bi-monthly programs and sponsors homes tour during Heritage Festival in August. Publishes newsletter five times a year.

Wish List For The Museum

President Pauline Walters is still searching for a **computer person** to help her convert our membership list to MS Access. She also needs someone to hook up the dot matrix printer.

For our Museum building, we still need an **antique doorknocker** or old-fashioned **"ding a ling" bell** so that visitors can make themselves known. We also need an **electric broom** to clean our wooden floors.

Our gardener, Pat Thompson, could use some muscle and an edger.

Karen O'Neal's list of wishes for the museum continues to be long:

- We need to **paint** the exterior of the Museum building.
- We need a **burglar alarm** system.
- We need **lights** for the two front posts and for the parking lot.
- We need to **seal the asphalt in** the parking lot.
- We need to repair and re-hang our **storm windows** and **doors**.
- We need **funding** for a permanent **exhibit.**
- We need **funding** for a part-time **director.**
- We need help with **exhibit** and **display materials.**

Anyone wishing to help with any of the above "wishes" please contact President Walters, 662-9092 or PopoWalt@ aol.com.

Knapp's Points

Our new coodinator, Esther Warzynski, reports that she is pleased to have people sending her the points and that she is very thankful for the continuing good response. You can mail your yellow slips from Knapp's Restaurants to her at 1520 Martha Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

Mark Your Calendars For Our Holiday Event

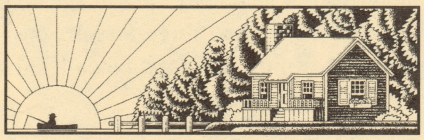
On December 4th and 5th the Society will hold an Open House at the Museum. We will be selling Christmas gift items as well as regular items from our gift shop. We will also have a holiday display and our dollhouse up for the occasion. Pat Thompson has agreed to decorate the house and Peggy Haines, Ginny Hills and Pauline Walters have formed a committee to set up a tree decorated with antique ornaments. Karen O'Neal has promised to have her antique toys on display. It will be held from 2-5 on both days and will compliment the displays and events at Kempf House which will be held that same weekend. Please mark your calendars now! Anyone who wishes to volunteer for this event please contact the society.

Certificates Offered

Certificates, framed if desired, are offered free of charge, by WCHS to organizations, businesses, churches, schools etc., for milestone anniversaries. Call the Society office for details.

Scenic Drives From 1899

Want to learn about scenic drives in Washtenaw County 100 years ago? A pamphlet written by UM Professor John Knott of the English Department and published by the Bentley Library reprints Judge Noah Cheever's manuscript called "Pleasant Walks and Drives About Ann Arbor." The 32-page booklet contains historical maps and photographs and leads the reader through the county in 1899 and today. It costs $5.95 and is available at Nicola's and Shaman Drum Books.



How To Join

Send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI Arbor 48106-3336.

Annual Dues are individual, $15, couple/family $25; student or senior (60+), $10; senior couple, $19; business/association, $50; patron $100. For information call 734-662-9092.

Noon Lecture Series At Kempf House

The Kempf House sponsors lectures every Wednesday at noon between now and November 17th. On October 13th Mary Bachman will discuss Decorative Combs and on October 20th Steve Stier will discuss Michigan Barns. Ilene Tyler will be talking about her work as restoration architect on the Detroit Observatory on October 27th and Frank Whitehouse will be discussing Washtenaw County Postal History on November 3rd. On November 11th Thomas Schroeder will be discussing High Wheel Bicycles. The lecture for November 17th is to be announced. The cost is $2.00 ($1.00 for members) which covers the lecture and a hot beverage.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17

Program

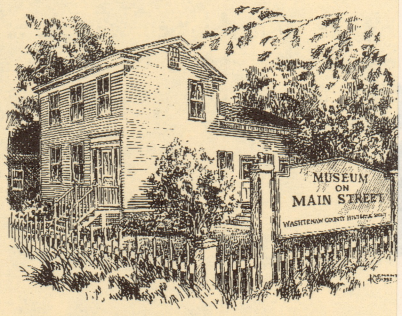
Professor David Lewis of the UM Business School will speak on "Henry Ford: Legend, Legacy and Local Landmarks." It will be held at the Bentley Library at 2 P.M. Refreshments will be served.

Please Note:

Sunday, October 17 – 2 PM
Prof. David L. Lewis
Bentley Library / N Campus

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Sunday, November 21 – 2 PM
"Ford's Village Industries"
Prof. Ted Ligibel
Rackham Bldg. EMU Campus



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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